

Kent County sewage spill suspends Delaware Bay shellfish harvest, prompts DNREC caution for recreational use of St. Jones River

Public advised to avoid length of river from Dover to Bowers until wastewater spill dispersed

DOVER – DNREC Secretary David Small issued an emergency order today suspending commercial and recreational shellfish harvest of oysters, clams and mussels in the Delaware Bay after a spill from a Kent County sewage pump station in Dover discharged hundreds of thousands of gallons of untreated wastewater into the St. Jones River which empties into the bay. The harvest closure will be in effect for 21 days after the county's wastewater discharge has been halted.

While the spill continues, DNREC also advised residents and recreationalists not to use the St. Jones River from its upper reaches of Silver Lake in Dover to Bowers, where it flows to the bay. DNREC also ordered Kent County's public works department to increase its monitoring of the river for bacteria and organics until water quality returns to pre-spill conditions. Kent County continues to make repairs as quickly as possible, and has been cooperating fully with DNREC and working with water users to try and reduce flows from the sanitary sewage system during repairs.

The spill – which occurred when repair of a force main near Magnolia in Kent County's sanitary sewer system caused an overflow at the Dover pump station – was reported today to

DNREC by Kent County's public works department. An earlier but smaller spill reported last week occurred in conjunction with the same force main repair. The current spill continued into the evening as an unknown but "significant amount of untreated wastewater" was carried downstream by an outgoing tide.

The DNREC emergency order noted that "Due to the health risks associated with untreated waste water, the Delaware Bay will be placed under an emergency shellfish harvesting closure to protect public health." The order also advised that "This shellfish closure only impacts the harvest of bivalve molluscan shellfish (clams, oysters and mussels), and does not affect the legal harvest of other shellfish species such as crabs and conchs," concluding that "Currently there is no commercial oyster harvest occurring in the Delaware Bay and little-to-no recreational harvest occurs this time of year."

The emergency Secretary's Order about suspending shellfish harvest in the Delaware Bay can be found on the DNREC website at

http://www.dnrec.delaware.gov/Info/Pages/SecOrders_Regulations.aspx For more information about the Kent County wastewater spill, please contact Kia Evans, Kent County Levy Court, at 302-744-2304.

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